



**MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
May 3, 2022**

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:38 pm.

Present: Mayor: Charlie Miner; Council: Jahn Dyvik, Mike Feldmann, Gina Joyce, and Deirdre Kvale

Staff Present: City Administrator: Scott Weske; City Clerk Moeller; City Attorney Thames; Public Works Director Diercks; Fire Chief Van Eyll

Absent: None

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

MAYOR'S COMMENTS – LONG LAKE NEWS, MEETING REVIEW AND UPDATES

Mayor Miner offered the following comments and updates:

The City Council met in a work session prior to the regular meeting during which they held a close session discussion regarding the purchase or sale of property located at 340 Willow Drive N.

Mayor Miner reported that there had been a great turnout for the Long Lake Fire Department's All You Can Eat Pancake & French Toast breakfast on May 1.

He also advised that construction has begun on the Aava Vetta townhome project near Nelson Lakeside Park.

APPROVE AGENDA

A motion was made by Dyvik, seconded by Joyce, to approve the agenda as presented. Ayes: all.

CONSENT AGENDA

The Consent Agenda consisted of:

- A. Approve Minutes of April 19, 2022 City Council Meeting
- B. Receive Unofficial Draft Minutes of April 19, 2022 Economic Development Authority Meeting
- C. Approve Vendor Claims and Payroll
- D. Receive 1st Quarter 2022 Revenues and Expenditures as of March 31, 2022

A motion was made by Feldmann, seconded by Miner, to approve the Consent Agenda, as presented. Ayes: all.

OPEN CORRESPONDENCE

Fire Chief Van Eyll thanked everyone in the community who came out to support the Long Lake Fire Department's All You Can Eat Pancake & French Toast breakfast event and noted that there had been over 1,100 people in attendance.

City Clerk Moeller mentioned that earlier today the City Council had received written comments that were submitted by Brian Miller of 295 Lakeview Avenue in relation to the Council's interactions and communications with the Long Lake Rowing Crew.

BUSINESS ITEMS

Preliminary Review and Discussion Regarding Moving Towards Monthly Utility Billing

City Administrator Weske commented that the City has always conducted utility billings on a quarterly basis and discussed reasons why City staff would like the Council to consider the concept of changing to a monthly utility billing process. He reviewed the potential benefits to making the change including ease for residents to budget, quicker notification of suspected leaks, and to encourage paying of the bill electronically. He noted that now that Finance/Utility Billing Officer Nowezki has been with the City for a few years, utility billing operations have become more streamlined and efficient and staff feels confident they would be prepared to make the proposed change. He explained that there are some items that staff has not yet fully researched, such as how they will print materials and meter reading options. If the Council approves a change to billing monthly, staff is hoping to have the process and rates in place by July 1, 2022 with monthly billing beginning October 1, 2022.

Council Member Kvale inquired what precipitated the monthly billing concept.

Weske indicated that there are not many communities who still do quarterly billing and reiterated that with monthly billing it can be much easier for people to budget for their utility billing expense.

Council Member Dyvik questioned if monthly billing would give a more accurate estimate of sewer use.

Weske clarified that sewer billing is based one for one on actual water usage and by ordinance and sewer is no longer locked in at a first quarter average for the year.

The Council discussed meter reading, staff time, sewer usage, and options to potentially encourage electronic billing.

Moeller advised that currently for all accounts, there are maybe about 10% who have opted out of paper billing. She added that many cities do not include return mailing envelopes like the City still does and noted that not including them may be a way to encourage people to pay electronically. She observed that quarterly billing has more of a tendency to surprise residents because it is easy to get out of touch with your actual usage when you aren't seeing a bill for three months.

Council Member Kvale questioned if it was possible to implement a surcharge if people utilize paper billing versus if they pay electronically to further encourage electronic payment.

Moeller responded that she wasn't sure on the Banyon software side of the equation if that would be possible.

Weske stated that he does think it may be possible, but staff would need to research the technical aspects of that idea. Staff is also still researching whether the best choice may be to purchase, lease, or outsource the equipment necessary for implementing monthly billing and bill stuffing.

Council Member Kvale asked how much of a savings there would be if the City stopped including the return envelope, and wondered how many bills are paid using the return envelope.

Moeller indicated that she receives some checks simply dropped off in the box, and added that probably 60 to 70% of people utilize the return envelopes. She mentioned that there are also some payments that come in via electronic means through residents' banking services. Currently each utility bill has a message that tells people that they can sign up for bill pay online, but staff questions whether the City has made it so convenient to pay in other ways that it has discouraged customers from signing up for the City's electronic bill payment service.

Council Member Kvale commented that she believes switching to monthly billing will definitely help residents when they are budgeting and allow for faster leak detection.

Moeller shared that there are also a lot of things that can happen with renters and move-ins and move-outs where the City doesn't receive information until six weeks after customers have moved. She stated that staff recognizes monthly billing will be more work, but feels there are benefits on all sides of this change.

Council member Dyvik inquired whether bills could be paid with something like Venmo as well.

Moeller clarified that the only options would be what PSN will accept and she was not sure if they accepted Venmo. She stated that staff can ask PSN what they offer with regard to accepting payments from those kinds of third-party providers. She added that Amanda, in some cases, has waived late fees for non-payment if customers sign up for automatic bill pay.

Mayor Miner noted that Medina also uses PSN and their web page includes a statement that says 'receive \$20 off your bill just for signing up for direct pay'.

Council member Dyvik suggested that the City come up with some sort of positive incentive for people to sign up for bill pay rather than a negative incentive to discourage paper billing.

Council member Joyce observed that her electronic payment email reminder comes from PSN and asked there would be a way to change the name of the sender and make it come from Long Lake to help avoid confusion.

Moeller responded that she wasn't sure that would be possible, but she would contact them to find out what they can and cannot do.

Following discussion, it was the consensus of the Council that staff be directed to continue researching and gathering information about moving to monthly utility billing and to bring further details to a future Council meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Attendance at Next Council Meeting - Council Member Dyvik noted that he will have to leave the next Council meeting by 7:45 pm.

Pedestrian Crossing Signage - Mayor Miner expressed his appreciation to staff for installing the new pedestrian safety crossing signs at the Mill Street and Wurzer Trail crossings. Weske welcomed the Council to provide staff with feedback if there are any additional places that they would like to see these signs.

Light Pole Replacements - Council member Dyvik inquired about the status of light pole replacements. Weske indicated that two light poles had been delivered; however, they were the wrong size. Staff is uncertain when the correct sized replacements will arrive.

Temporary Public Launch Closures - Moeller reported that the Lake Street access to the public launch at Nelson Lakeside Park will experience temporary closures for underground utility work. The access will be closed Monday through Thursday this week, next week, and likely also the following week. Staff is hoping the work necessitating the closures will be wrapped up around May 19, 2022.

ADJOURN

Hearing no objection, Mayor Miner adjourned the meeting by general consent at 7:27 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Weske
City Administrator